



Client Handout

# Is Self-care Christian?

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In some Christian churches, self-care is looked down on and even considered to be an expression of selfishness. It's suggested that following Jesus always means caring for others first, no matter the cost. This belief can be a limiting factor in recovery for people with this idea, especially when combined with shame or condemnation. Is it accurate for Christians to consider self-care selfish?

Consider Jesus' example and the language about Jesus' behavior, just in these passages from the Gospel of Mark:

*1:33-37, 45 The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many . . . Very early . . . Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place. . . . and when they found Him, they exclaimed, Everyone is looking for you!" . . . Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places.*

*2:2, 13 So many gathered there was no room left . . . A large crowd came . . .*

*3:7-9, 13 Jesus withdrew with His disciples...He told His disciples to have a small boat ready for Him, to keep the people from crowding Him . . . He called to those He wanted . . . appointed twelve.*

*3:20, 4:1 A crowd gathered so that He and His disciples were not even able to eat . . . The crowd that gathered was so large that He got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake.*

*4:10, 34, 38 When He was alone . . . When He was alone with His own disciples . . .Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion . . .*

*5:18, 37 The man...begged to go with Him . . . Jesus did not let him . . . He did not let anyone follow Him except . . .*

*5:40, 43 After He put them all out . . . He gave strict orders not to let anyone know . . .*

*6:30-31 Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, He said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. "*

Selfishness reflects an exaggerated sense of self-importance. It sees its own needs as more important than the needs of others. Selfishness is a distortion of self-image. In contrast, Selfness recognizes the importance of our own needs as well as those of others. It is realistic in its self-assessment, recognizing the humanity and needs of all. This perspective acknowledges that we exist, that we all have needs, and all those needs matter. Selfness pays tribute to the value in all of us, without demanding ourselves. Selfishness says, "My needs are more important than yours". Selfness says, "We are both here and have needs, that is the human condition. Let us work together to meet our own and others." Even though Jesus was self-sacrificial, even he chose the time of His sacrifice (Luke 4:30), and made it clear that it was by His choosing. "I lay down my life, no one takes it from me . . . I lay it down on my own accord." (Jn. 10:17)